

# Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

---

Volume II.

AUGUST 1947

Number 14.

---

## CONTENTS:

WHAT IS MYSTICISM?	The Editor	49
SIN	Bede Jarrett, O.P.	52
TEMPTATION	Conrad Pepler, O.P.	55
THE LAPSED	M.T.Parnell	62
THE JESUS PSALTER	M.M.Merrick	65
THE FOLLOWERS OF FOUCAULD	L.C.Sheppard	69
THE VEN. BATTISTA VERNAZZA (I)		73
REVIEWS	Donald Attwater, G.Meath, O.P., etc.	84

BLACKFRIARS,  
ST GILES,  
OXFORD.

One Shilling  
Monthly

## Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

*Literary Communications* should be addressed to The Editor,

Life of the Spirit,  
Blackfriars,

Oxford (Tel. 3607).

The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted; and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

*Communications regarding Advertisements* should be addressed to The Manager at the above address.

*Subscriptions and Orders* should also be sent to The Manager, Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford (Tel. 3607). Annual Subscription 12/6 post free (U.S.A. \$3.00).



# Life of the Spirit

Volume II

AUGUST 1947

Number 14

## WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

BY THE EDITOR



INTEREST in mystical topics remains as keen in the post-war world as was its revival during the anxious waiting on air raids and the distress following on bomb and blast. This interest may still be tinged with the desire to escape harsh realities in a sweet and hazy haven of beautiful ideas. Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* or Warner Allen's *Timeless Moment* are not free from a desire for a common mystical experience which will transcend all wars, particularly religious wars, seeking for a way out of the *impasse* in which mankind is now involved. And these two books are no more than recent pointers to a popular concern with things other than sensory or physical.

It is therefore of importance in a journal dedicated to the study of such subjects to make certain what is meant by *Mysticism* and what part, if any, it plays in the spiritual growth of the soul. THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT has indeed referred frequently to the lives and writings of men and women whom it has become customary to call mystics. People like St Catherine of Siena, writings like the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, and doubtful figures like Margery Kempe have all been placed under this one category. Later the review will have occasion to consider the works of men who had not the faith of Christ in them and yet have been brought under the same heading. Indeed the *Perennial Philosophy* includes all such writings as of one and the same spirit. It is not, however, an unwarranted inversion to have studied the teaching of individual mystical writers and their lives before deciding on the nature of mysticism. In general, perhaps, it would be less deceptive to avoid the title and call them 'Spiritual Writers' and place them in the wider category of men concerned with the divine. But it is useful to have some idea of the life and teaching of those whom men call 'mystics' before attempting to set down a definition of mysticism. After reading their works we are in a position to ask what they have in common.

At first sight it might seem that the mystics have holiness in common and that the study of mysticism is a study of types and ways of holiness. This is particularly misleading for those who embrace the fundamentally sound teaching that the mystic heights are the culmin-

ation of the normal way of sanctity, open to all to ascend, as all are called to be saints. If it is a high degree of love and union with God which makes the mystic, then we should surely all aspire to be mystics. And yet, following the general use of the term, we do not gather St John Bosco nor even the Little Flower under this title, or at least only in a derived sense. On the other hand, there are many among the lists of mystical writers who have never been raised to the altars of the Church. Holy they certainly must have been, but the Church has not recognised in them the final marks of heroic virtue. It may be an accident due to the Reformation that none of the English mystics is honoured by a feast day nor even by mention in the martyrology. But the Continent provides even greater evidence in the persons of Eckhart, Tauler, Gerard de Groote and à Kempis. Sanctity is a matter of the union—perhaps hidden from the knowledge of all—between a soul and God. The saint has overcome sin and self-delusion which hinder him on his way; he has practised the virtues of asceticism to an heroic degree and in this way has assisted in preparing himself for the full flowering of grace when he may live the same life as the Trinity. We must insist on this continuity of asceticism with mysticism, but we must qualify the obvious conclusion from this which would make every man who had progressed beyond the realms of simple asceticism into a mystic.

We ought to say rather that the man who is thus raised to the closest union with God is given the elements or ingredients of the mystic life but not the right to be called a mystic. It would be dangerous to identify mysticism in its proper sense with the highest forms of the spiritual life. For the word, preserving as it does the notion of a hidden truth, has come to be associated properly with the experience of divine truths, the seeing of visions, the suffering of ecstasies and the like. Mother Julian saw and considered her revelations and St Catherine did likewise; but there is an undeniable difference between these two women of the fourteenth century in the way grace unfolded in their souls and led them to the union of love. They may vie with one another as mystics, but, though both are holy, sanctity differs profoundly in each. In *The Timeless Moment* Warner Allen says that the greatest spiritual phenomena are those of visions and ecstasies and he quotes St Teresa in his support. But any Catholic reader knows that visions and ecstasies are accidental to the essence of the spiritual life; they are not to be expected nor even sought; they are charismata, extraordinary graces from God granted to souls without respect to merit. In other words, the *experience* of God's grace is not essential to the spiritual life at any stage except the last, while some such experience is necessary



for the just attribution of the title mystic. A writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* approached this truth when he defined mysticism as 'an adherence of the inmost spirit to God, through the will, accompanied by a profound intuition of that union'. (January 11th, 1947, p. 20.) It may thus be clearly distinguished from *Theology* in its modern usage, though this distinction is not so clear in its earlier sense of theology as a *loving* knowledge of God as used in the title *Theologia Germanica* and by St John of the Cross in his references to mystical theology. The knowledge of divine mysteries is not derived from human powers of reasoning. A mystic knows the divine mystery because he feels it, not because he argues about it, and he can feel the mystery of union with God at different stages of spiritual growth. It would seem therefore that the element of experimental knowledge plays the *formal* part in mysticism, while the love of God, which is the formal element in holiness, is the *material*, the two together completing the essential nature of mysticism. This would account for the fact of there being many saints who are not mystics, and many mystics who are perhaps only at the beginning of sanctity.

Accepting this conclusion we might ask whether a mysticism were possible in which sanctity was not present at all. Could there be a criminal mystic? And where can the pagan mystic be fitted, for he has not the faith? Experimental knowledge of divine things without grace would seem a contradiction; experimental knowledge without faith would seem to be an established fact. These are subsequent questions with which we hope to deal in future numbers of this review.

## S I N

BY

BEDE JARRETT, O.P.<sup>1</sup>

N dealing with our conscience we try to remind ourselves of the fact that it is almost impossible to be sure to what extent we are answerable for the evil of our lives. We never know with what bias or handicap we start life. God only knows. He knows what is beyond our personal control. We can't really tell—we may be worse than we think ourselves, we may be better. We can only make a shrewd guess with no certainty. We don't even know whether we are in a state of grace or not; we can't go by feeling—self-complacency—there are no internal or external signs. We can be pretty sure we are trying, but we don't know for certain.

It is best to leave it to our Blessed Lord. When he was asked whether a large proportion of people would be saved he said, 'Strive *thou* to enter by the narrow gate'. All we have got to do is to strive to redouble our efforts, the rest leave to his support, and his mercy. We are unable then to gauge the amount of evil in us, but what do we mean by evil? What *is* sin? What is it that destroys our work? 'Sin', St Augustine tells us, 'is any thought, or deed or word or omission contrary to the law of God'. 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. That is the only way in which we can show our love. His commandments given in the Old Law and amplified in the New. 'Thou shalt not kill, but *I* say unto thee whosoever is angry with his brother is a murderer'. Our Lord explains the commandment: before, murder was forbidden, now uncharitable speech is forbidden—not destroying, filling out the Old Law. Any violation of those laws constitutes sin. There is a distinction between grave and venial sin. To constitute grievous sin three things are necessary. Grave matter, full knowledge, full consent. If either condition is missing the sin is not grave but venial.

Sin is contrary to the commandments, a violation of them, but this is still far from its real meaning. There is a certain degree of coldness associated in our mind with a law, but not only is sin contrary to law, it is contrary to love. It is so much easier to obey the command of someone we love. If we don't love them we may have a struggle to obey, to give up our own independence; if we love them their slightest suggestion is sufficient, we are anxious to be of service. Our whole view of obedience is considerably altered according to our personal

---

<sup>1</sup> From a Retreat preached in Edinburgh, July, 1932.



relationship to that authority—not quite right, perhaps, but that's how we are. In the commandments we have got to consider not merely what is the law, but who is giving the commandment. 'You are my friends'. 'Greater love than this no man has, that he lay down his life for his friend'. We are addressed by our Lord in terms of friendship. The Old Law was given in great majesty and awe, God wanted to terrify them. On the Mount of the Sermon our Blessed Lord reveals to us *his* law. It is still severe. 'I say to thee'. He speaks with authority, but he asks from us obedience in love—*love* not terror. The commandments already given to us are filled out in greater detail, in *love*, spoken by the lips of him who later hung upon the cross. God tried first fear, and then drew men to himself by the cords of Adam. We are to obey that law out of love, the first and only commandment.

We must obey out of love. To go to Mass on Sunday because we must is law, not religion. There must be in my heart a general attitude of love and gratitude, desire to serve him. 'If you love me, keep my commandments'. 'The only way I want my commandments kept'. Now when we sin we do something contrary to his love. He takes a mean advantage of us—goes and dies for us and then turns round and says 'Now, will you obey?' 'He has first loved us'. Now he says to us, 'What are you going to do?' Sin is the meanest of actions. Suppose they who lie in the fields of France on the other side of the Channel asked something of us, could we refuse when they died to save us? Don't look upon it as law, but as the request of a friend. We are affected by the request of those we love. He ventures to make his appeal and we should not be hurt, but moved by gratitude. So sin is unutterably mean and petty. He has gone to the outer edge of affection. 'Having saved you I now ask you—' law coming to us from the lips of love. Never let go the fact that sin is really a desperate act of selfishness. If I examine I shall find that what I have done is selfishness—not done against God deliberately but because we don't care. 'It is asking too much', we say. Remember first of all what he has done before he asks obedience from the Cross. Our only safeguard is to insist upon this with ourselves. We have our tale of daily usual sins, realise what acts of meanness and selfishness they are. *Self* I am thinking of—not the God who has died for me.

The thought of sin is undoubtedly a depressing thought. In retreat we are struck by our own failing to live up to grace. So much that is wrong in our lives could have been staved off without much effort. Our inspiration must spring from our love of the law Giver. Yet though sin is a depressing and discouraging subject we believe in the existence of God—powerful—merciful. So we must believe in the final triumph of God. God is love, and love is stronger than death or

jealousy. Over this world is Goodness Absolute—synonymous with power. The existence of this omnipotent Goodness is a pledge to us that Good must triumph, and so, however hard pushed, we have no grounds for laying aside our persistent efforts, for giving up hope. I have failed—done a great deal of mischief, but that is no motive for losing courage or hope. God is in his world and *should* be able, *must* be able, to draw good out of evil. Were he not able he never could have allowed sin to come into the world. He would not be God at all. Whatever evils are in the world God must let them be and in some way or another he means good to come of it. He let evil come because he saw good to come. It is a mystery. In some way evil ministers to his plan. Evil in some fashion or another does not wholly destroy his plan—not only physical evil—death, pain—but moral evil, sin. There is hell, but even that must minister in some way to his glory.

God lets us fail in this and that—perhaps only so we shall learn mercy to others—otherwise that fatal complacency of the Pharisees. We are unprofitable servants at the best, conscious of our own desperate weakness, however much our vanity is hurt. God is of infinite goodness and will never deny me any grace necessary to my salvation. He is always holding out to me mercy, always asking me to return. No one is lost but through his own fault. We have no business to lose courage in life. God is by our side. God is in his world—in our heart—folding us in his wings. So we must go on, not presuming on his goodness—relying on it, clambering out of evil by the steps God has placed there. God has denied us nothing necessary and so we turn to him all through life. However sunk in evil the world was, it always shrank from evil—twin basis of hope—something in man which revolts from evil, longs for a still better way and is moved by goodness in others, respects it.

God is over all; however much we may see the shadow darkening it, over all is God's power. So sin should never discourage or depress. Sin is a human weakness and God is over all sin and weakness of man. Mercy and Strength—God.

Our personal sin when it seems to spoil our life must not be left at this. Sin is worse than that, worse than we can ever know; nevertheless we must *never* lose hope or courage. Sin is our act—mercy God's. Our reliance is not on ourself, but on God, and out of darkness breaks—must break surely—the dawn of hope. 'To err is human, to forgive divine'. To sin, to outrage the love of God. Mercy is God—it is only love, isn't it? sitting with tears in its eyes.

And so we look back on the past, forward to the future with eyes of hope, and out of the future comes the life that still remains.



## PASSIVE PURIFICATION—TEMPTATION

(Ancren Riwele, Part 4)

BY

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.



ACTIVITY in the part played by the individual's choice of a rule of life, by his seeking of solitude and shunning the world, is necessary for the first stages of the spiritual life, but it is of less importance in the soul's growth and formation than the purification which is brought about by God himself. As soon as the soul has begun to give herself generously to the work of her salvation, God begins to co-operate by sending her temptations or trials which show up the weaknesses and exercise the virtues which are most needed. We have called these trials passive because they are provided or allowed by God and the Christian does not have to choose the way to progress. But the will must choose to co-operate actively with God's grace in striving to master self and overcome the attack. In this way the first trials of the spiritual life require a great deal of activity and consequently are not technically Passive Purification in the sense generally accepted by spiritual writers. The first passive purification, strictly speaking, begins with the purification of the senses, the dark night of the senses, which leads from this first way to the second, or illuminative way. These assaults on the soul, however, prepare her for the beginning of the first night, and are to be accepted as the preliminary. They begin to be intense towards the end of the Purgative Way. For, as the *Riwele*, which dedicates the whole of the fourth and longest part to this subject, points out:

'The good, who have reached a high degree of virtue, are more tempted than the frail' (p. 133).

If a man feels no temptation he should beware, for his state is precarious indeed. A man will not watch who thinks his castle is secure; but there is no security without watching and the very self-assurance of the unguarded is full of evils of many kinds.

Many people in fact think that temptations are to be deplored, that temptation itself sullies their souls. There is a truth in this attitude in so far as fallen nature is implicated in the temptation and to that extent the individual becomes involved. But man can make no progress without such trials. The *Riwele* leads up to this section by speaking of the 'falling sickness':

'It is very necessary that an anchoress of holy and highly pious life have the falling sickness . . . an infirmity of the body, or tempta-

tion of carnal frailty, by which she seems to herself to fall down from her holy and exalted piety. She would otherwise grow presumptuous, or have too good an opinion of herself, and so come to nothing. The flesh would rebel and become too insubordinate. . . . God so wills it, in order that she may be always humble; and, with low estimation of herself, fall to the earth, lest she become proud' (pp. 131-132).

So in fact these trials are necessary and salutary on the one hand, dangerous and contaminating on the other. At one time we read that Christ was driven by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted, at another that we must ask not to be led into temptation. There is in fact a distinction to be introduced here which will explain the paradox and teach the beginner how to hold himself in times of testing and prevent himself from being unreasonably dejected by the appearance of crude carnal sins. The *Rivle* offers a very practical and much-needed warning to those who are tempted, not to be afraid and discomforted by what, in reality, happens for their salvation (p. 134). Our Lord himself pointed out to St Catherine that the reason why she so loathed and hated the foul images that flooded her mind when he seemed to be absent was the fact that he was still present in her heart repulsing the evil. For there are two sorts of temptations, external and internal. The external itself, which is derived from other things, may be either from without or from within. Internal trials come from the man himself and may themselves be either without or within, but in each case they flow from the weakness of his will. In speaking of Christ's temptation, St Thomas shows that there is one type of temptation which flows from the man himself not shunning the ways of sin, and this must always be repudiated most vigorously; whereas the type which comes from the devil must be tackled and dealt with as intended by God (III, 41, art. 2, ad 2).

The external temptations should be classed under the general title of trials, for the first one listed in the *Rivle* is that of ill-health, which can play a very important part in the purgative stage of the spiritual life. 'Sickness is a fire which is patiently to be endured, but no fire so purifieth the gold as it doth the soul' (p. 136). To read the lives of some saints it would seem that their frequent ill-health was brought on by their stupendous austerities. Their headaches, hæmorrhages, bilious attacks, general frailty and early death seem to have been the direct result of their prolonged fasts and vigils. Some might even foolishly think it a rather glorious thing to 'overcome the flesh' in such a way that it succumbed to disease or even to death through neglect and bad treatment. Whatever the inspiration of particular saints may have been, however, it is certain that such a policy is regarded by every good spiritual writer as foolhardy and a definite



evil, perhaps with a flavour in it of Manichean heresy. 'For many make themselves sick through their fool-hardiness: and this displeaseth God' (p. 136). The sickness that is a purification is one that comes from God's dispensation, in spite of the exercise of prudence in the matter of austerities and of the needs of life.

Through this type of purification Mother Julian herself was prepared for illumination and the higher forms of spiritual life. With due submission of will to God's design, she had prayed for sickness, and that is quite different from ruining health through excessive penance. A Christian may ask for this sort of purification as it is not a temptation of itself connected with sin, for which we pray the opposite 'lead us not into temptation'. Mother Julian was asking to be purged in this way:

'I freely desiring that sickness to be so hard as to death . . . myself thinking that I should die, and that all creatures might suppose the same that saw me; for I would have no manner of comfort of earthly life. . . . And this I meant for that I would be purged, by the mercy of God, and afterward live more to the worship of God'.<sup>1</sup>

She desired it always under the necessary condition 'if it be thy will that I have it'. And there were times later when the sickness was upon her that she almost regretted having asked for it. God does in fact very often test the beginner with physical suffering and pains, and the other discomforts of sickness, as, for example, the pain to a generous person of being a burden to others, having to be served and nursed by them. Often people do not progress beyond this purification, but allow it to turn them more or less back on their tracks. The worst cases of such a misuse of the sacrament of sickness become embittered, unhappy people, the heart withered up and devoid of all warmth of love. But a good use of this trial does lead the soul quickly on the way. It reveals many defects which God helps to eradicate, it teaches many fundamental virtues such as patience and humility.

'Sickness maketh man to understand what he is, and to know himself; and, like a good master, it corrects a man, to teach him how powerful God is, and how frail is the happiness of this world' (p. 137).

Common experience shows that a severe illness often has the most spiritualising effect upon people, particularly perhaps upon young children, who have less experience of bitterness; but at other times such sickness will produce a terrible despair which is utterly self-centred.

Other trials come from fellow creatures. Once the Christian has

---

<sup>1</sup> *Revelations of Divine Love* recorded by Julian Anchoress at Norwich, edited by Grace Warrack (London 1901), chapter 2, p. 4.

set forth with determination towards the new Jerusalem, he is inevitably assailed by slander, misjudgment, pity or contempt. Often this attack comes from people who themselves profess to be walking on the same road, pious people who are constantly at their prayers in church, or religious authorities who have the divine power of direction. Always it is hard to bear without protest and retaliation calumny and attacks from those one is bound by obedience and charity to revere. These are usually the sign of a genuine progress towards perfection. The violent attacks which Marjorie Kempe suffered for so long suggest that there was something genuine about her curious type of spirituality.

'Daughter', our Lord once said to her, 'the more shame, despite and reproof thou sufferest for my love, the better I love thee, for I am like a man that loveth well his wife. The more envy that men have of her, the better he will array her in despite of her enemies'.<sup>2</sup> It was a type of suffering very specially manifested in the Passion of Christ (p. 141); and as the deicidal Jews assisted in the glory of the sacrifice, so the enemies who wrong the good Christian are in fact files, filing away the rust and roughness of sin, or God's rod chastening his children (p. 138). Ignominy, contempt, ill-usage, these things, the *Riwele* says later on, make the arms of the ladder stretching up to heaven, supporting the rungs which are the virtues (p. 268). The soul must not allow herself to be cast down by opposition or by slights, by others' failure to credit her with what she has done. These are indeed hard trials to bear, harder than physical ills, but they are always indicative that God is leading the soul onwards, and they always bring with them a great increase in self-knowledge and purification. A man naturally patient and disliking fuss will find under such trials that there lurks deep in his soul a great impatience or contempt of others which is revealed by unjust attacks. He has to master all these instincts and learn to love all men, in particular those who have harmed him, to kiss the rod that beat him, to do good to or at least to pray for those who do evil against him (p. 14). A long time may elapse before a man can hold himself sufficiently firmly not to explain to his friends and acquaintances things about himself which they have been led to misunderstand through some busybody.

Inner types of temptation, which are still regarded as properly distinct from the soul and so coming from without, are simply the reactions which a man may suffer on impact with external evil. The devil himself often closes in on the soul of a beginner, not in the expected and hackneyed forms of horrifying apparitions and grotesque

<sup>2</sup> *The Book of Marjorie Kempe*. A modern version by W. Butler-Bowden (Cape. London 1936), chapter 32, p. 125.



suggestions, but with cunning subtlety. He will play on the powers which he finds dominant in a soul. Thus a man who is really generous and whole-hearted in his desire for perfection may be led to confuse the ideals of perfection which he has worked out rationally for himself with the concrete reality to which God is calling him. Such a mistake leads to a confusion between God and self, and the very love of the ideal becomes a passionate love of self. Another may be naturally sympathetic and easy-tempered, and he will easily become enmeshed in his relationship with those around him, anxious to help, but without prudence and without a sufficiently supernatural motive. Another will be led away by his very enthusiasm for the Kingdom of God into a great many activities and jobs which gradually dry up his soul and make prayer and solitude distasteful. The devil

'endeavours to make someone so zealous to flee from the things that make the life of man agreeable, that she falls into the deadly evil of sloth; or into such profound thought that she becomes foolish' (p. 170).

All these enthusiasms and energies are good in themselves but the devil can often redirect their force into evil channels. And it is often only subtle attacks which reveal the extent to which self is implicated in such delightfully powerful enthusiasms. It is by these attacks that the motive begins to be purified of the self-seeking inevitable even in the generosity of the beginner. All this the *Riwle* sets forth in a passage distinguishing light and heavy, subtle and manifest temptations; the devil thus transforms an anchoress into a 'housewife of hell'. 'Lo! thus the hellish traitor pretendeth to be a faithful adviser' (pp. 166-173). (Comp. *Dark Night of the Soul*, Bk 1, Chap. 2).

Such external temptations and trials do not of themselves contaminate the soul, and are in fact full of promise for the future, giving the soul the chance to practise, in an ever more heroic degree, the virtues required for perfection. They represent in a special manner God's love for the soul, though people are often inclined to think they signify that God has lost interest and retired.

'Every worldly affliction is God's ambassador. . . . As God loved me, saith he, he sent me to his dear friend. My coming, and my abiding, though it may seem bitter, is yet salutary' (p. 143).

As God does not allow a man to be tempted beyond his strength, there can be no fear of falling so long as he trusts in the Father to protect him. Every attack of this nature is in fact a sacrament fraught with much grace. For at the same time that the affliction or temptation approaches, the Father himself draws close with supernatural aid necessary to overcome the attacks. A man who trusts in his own strength is certainly lost, because he does not recognise the sacramental character of what is before him; he takes the sickness or the

calumny at its face value, instead of seeing that through it God is offering new graces, new purification. These are outward signs of inner grace, when a man is stricken with a painful disease when his friends forsake him, when he finds himself cast down with no joy to lighten his darkness, when his dearest relative dies or is removed to a distance. Such things point to a new power offered the soul by God, a power at once self-revealing, in disclosing a weakness where strength was supposed to lie, and purifying in the bitterness of its application.

As the soul progresses and God pours greater strength into her, so do these trials increase in their vigour and subtlety. People will often think that these trials come early and leave after a short stay, with peace and spiritual enjoyment following their sojourn. On the contrary, as his spiritual life grows strong, so does a man have to suffer more: he becomes more passive in these trials, but they are in themselves more bitter and painful. At first, they will be fleshly temptations, clearly such, and, to a generous person, overcome safely even though with great stress. Later these trials leave the obvious realms of lust and luxury and enter the spiritual realms. So the anchoress is not to be distraught should she find herself bitterly tormented after many years of contemplation. God treats her as a man treats a newly-wedded wife, at first gently, later, when assured of her love, with more vigour in correcting her faults:

'If Jesu Christ, your Spouse, doth thus to you, let it not seem strange to you. For in the beginning it is only courtship, to draw you into love; but as soon as he perceives that he is on a footing of affectionate familiarity with you, he will now have less forbearance with you: . . . Thus our Lord spareth at first the young and feeble, and draweth them out of this world gently, and with subtlety. But as soon as he sees them inured to hardships, he lets war arise and be stirred up, and teacheth them to fight and suffer want'.  
(p. 166-167).

In this way grace and purification grow by geometric progression; the higher up the scale of perfection the more profound the temptation and therefore the more grace is offered and the deeper sears the knife of purification.

At first then a sense of security often accompanies the temptation. The Christian turns to God and recognises that he is held in the divine power, which is poured out anew with every new attack or trial. But when his spirit is grown stronger even this sense of security vanishes; God himself seems to withdraw. Acts of faith will convince the sufferer that God is still present, that the assaults are still redolent of grace and divine succour. But nothing else remains to assure him that it is so; he is left to the ultimate resource, truly the night of



faith. At that moment the full passive purification of the senses has commenced.

‘When two persons are carrying a burden, and one of them letteth it go, he that holdeth it up may then feel how it weigheth. Even so, dear sister, while God beareth thy temptation along with thee, thou never knowest how heavy it is, and therefore, upon some occasion, he leaveth thee alone, that thou mayest understand thine own feebleness, and call for his aid and cry aloud for him’ (p. 146.)

In this way does God assist in the purification and the revelation of self-knowledge which help the soul to burn away the dross. St John of the Cross has described this process vividly in terms of the mother weaning her child by putting bitter aloes on her breasts; and he goes on to show how necessary this process is for perfection, since many, practising great penances and spending long hours in prayer, yet retain many imperfections and remain very weak until all consolation is removed by such purification. The Spaniard then proceeds to analyse these imperfections and weaknesses in terms of the seven capital sins. (*Dark Night*, Bk. 1, ch. 1.)

It is here too that we may turn to these sins which these temptations and trials are intended to eradicate. For the *Riue* describes the inward temptations in terms of the vices in the man himself, the habits which make him prone to sin in certain directions. ‘Now the inward temptation is twofold: carnal and spiritual. Carnal, as of lechery, gluttony, and sloth. Spiritual, as of pride, envy, and wrath’. (p. 146). These temptations which proceed from weakness in a man’s own nature do in fact justify a certain type of fear and troubling of conscience when they arise. For, up to a point at least, they involve sin. They need not be actual sins committed by the deliberation of mind and will, but they flow out from a sinful state. They can hardly be listed as so many items in the list at confession, but the man is himself implicated.<sup>3</sup> And further, owing to the very weakness and disorder in the passions whence they proceed, these temptations make it very difficult for a man not to be moved, however slightly. These are the evil fruit left by past actual sin as well as by original sin. Consequently in speaking of the inner trials, we are in fact speaking of the more predominant faults of this period of purification.

---

<sup>3</sup> cf. Archbishop Temple and Victor White, O.P., on this subject in *Blackfriars*, March, 1944.

## THE LAPSED

BY

M. T. PARNELL

*Quasi holocausta accepit eos.*

CROSS the fair landscape of the Church's life, and dimming the sunlight of her holiness, and casting a shadow over her beauty, is that heavy cloud, which surely grows no less in these days of unpeacefulness, that cloud of lapsed Catholics. This blot is ever present with us, marring the joy and triumph of the Church's life, staining the robe of her perfection. The faithful are always there, the sweet odour of their prayers and good works rising like clouds of incense, ceaselessly up to God. New converts are received; but still that ugly cloud remains to darken our sun, and wound anew the broken Heart of God. There are the ever moving, tragic figures of the once-faithful turning away, repudiating the Light, casting aside the outstretched wounded hand they once held, turning their backs upon the love of God. Tragic indeed for their own sakes; for what can be worse than for a soul to have seen the Light, and deliberately to turn from it? To have known the Truth, and to repudiate it? To have experienced the Love, and to have none of it?

But more tragic, more disastrous than all this on the individual soul, is the immeasurable evil that is wrought to the Church, to the faith, to the world, by the fact of the lapse of one of these souls. Nowhere has the devil more power, nowhere has he got so facile and deadly a weapon, than the soul of the lapsed Catholic. He uses these souls, not only for their own downfall, but for the corruption and weakening of many another soul too. The lapsed Catholic, however lacking in active animosity he may be to the Church he once adhered to, is in truth by his very lapse the deadliest and most dangerous enemy of that Church. I venture to say that more harm has been done to the Church by one lapsed soul, however seemingly passive, than by hundreds of active enemies outside. I would not presume to affirm what is usually the cause of the lapse of the great majority of those who go. The priest in his study and experience of the human soul knows best what this cause may be. But the cure for this ill may well be, humanly speaking, in the hands of the laity themselves. Not that many of us are called to use argument or even persuasion in the matter. In any case, that is usually of little avail. But to some there does come the call, the vocation, to offer themselves up as holocausts, as victims of the divine love, for lapsed Catholics. This is a distinct vocation; it is not for all, not even for the majority. To understand



the purport of such a vocation, we must try to see the object from God's point of view. Think for a moment of any lapsed Catholic you know, man or woman, boy or girl—let us call him John. Then consider: 'God so loved the world that he *gave* . . .' Yes; he so loved the world, and the world is a collection of individuals, and for each one God has loved, and given. He loved, and still loves, this lapsed Catholic. All his love, his power, his pain, has been poured out for this one soul, John. Bethlehem was for John—Calvary was for John—the Resurrection was for John—the Ascension, and Heaven itself, for John. And God himself—all love, all beauty, all power, has given himself to John in the white Host, the 'Flake of Christ', again and again and again.

And what has happened? John has thrust all love, all beauty, all power, away from him. He has repudiated the outstretched wounded hand, cast aside the love of the Sacred Heart, decided to 'walk no more with him'. 'My son—my daughter—will you also go away?' We too must hear that cry of love and anguish before we can understand what this vocation for the lapsed is going to demand. 'Will ye also go away?', and one by one they turn and go, these sons and daughters of his divine love, his divine pity. And it may be our vocation to offer ourselves up as holocausts to turn one, or even more, of these poor blinded ones back to the Sacred Heart. If it is, then our feet are set on a road of loneliness, pain and exhaustion, a veritable 'Way of the Cross'.

*Loneliness*, because even our nearest and dearest will in all probability misunderstand us, and anyway can never approach the inner darkness we must know and follow in our Calvary.

*Pain*—for not only must it contain a sharing in the grief of the Sacred Heart for souls who have turned from him, but also it will in all probability entail physical suffering to a certain degree.

*Exhaustion*—yes, of mind and body, as the offering is accepted and the life-energy drawn out, and united with the sufferings of the Cross.

But it is a vocation, and like all vocations it can be refused. There is no habit, no uniform, no badge, no organisation, connected with this vocation. Hidden away, secret, unrecognised, and unrecognisable. Living in the world, but not of the world; the world crucified to us and we to the world. Here it is that we may be accused of eccentricity, or even unsociability, because it will become increasingly difficult to live the ordinary life of the world of pleasure and social activity, when body, mind and spirit, are a victim of his love. The world, as a whole, is friendly to, even admiring of good works, even if performed by religious. It can never understand or appreciate the inner life of prayer and offering which is the life of the holocaust. But he who cries,

'Will ye also go away?' to those who turn from him may ask of some of the faithful, 'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?' Dare we accept it? Can we refuse it? To be asked to surrender ourselves utterly—nail ourselves as willing victims to his Cross for the souls he loved and lived and died for, is not that a task we must undertake with all that is in us should he ask for it? Can we refuse the plea of so great a Lover?

Loneliness, pain, and exhaustion, that is the price, the price to pay that anyway one lapsed soul may be brought back, to solace the wounds of his most Sacred Heart. The cloud hangs heavy and dark over the life of the Church; the stain is a blemish on her beauty. Argument, endless talk, will not lift it, will not cleanse it. There is only one way—sacrifice—the offering up of holocausts, of the victims of the divine love, united to his divine sacrifice on Calvary. The lives of offering and prayer, hidden away in loneliness, in pain, often in exhaustion, known only to him.

'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?' Tremblingly some will answer, and in deepest humility, 'We can, we will'. God grant that many may be found to face this great aloneness, and may offer up their lives as holocausts and victims, to stem the tide of lapsing Catholics, and bring them back once more to the love of the Sacred Heart.

#### AN ACT OF REPARATION FOR LAPSED CATHOLICS

'Lord, I am thine only, thine utterly.

I offer thee my body, mind and spirit.

I am the victim of thy love,

A holocaust, offered up on behalf of the souls of lapsed Catholics.

Unite this sacrifice, poor and wretched though it is

With thy most perfect Sacrifice on Calvary,

That at least one lapsed soul may be turned back to thee this day,

And so may solace the wounds of thy most Sacred Heart.

Lord, I am thine only, thine utterly,

Thine, in perpetual Reparation. Amen.'

## THE JESUS PSALTER

BY

M. M. MERRICK



HE popularity of this prayer in the books of times earlier than ours is well shown in accounts of the lives and deaths of the English Martyrs, that is, of those saints who were put to death for their Faith between the years 1535 and 1681.

In those days, when the alleged activities of the Stationers' Company made all Catholic printing and book-selling contraband, we find repeatedly that '*Manuals of Devotion*' were found in the presses of the intrepid printers, or that in the search through their houses the pursuivants found 'divers psalters'. So it was with Carter and Wobley, with Collins and Duckett; all truly martyrs. The books were often proclaimed our Lady's psalters, meaning what were also called Books of Hours; perhaps because the new man-made religion so ignored our Lady that her faithful children were all the more dedicated to her service. Often too the books used by these hunted Catholics had in them the Psalter of Jesus, in English as we have it now. In the less persecuted but still unsure days of the early nineteenth century it found its way into the first *Key of Heaven*, *Flowers of Nazareth*, and so into many lesser known books such as *The Treasury of the Sacred Heart*, in the later days of the century, when we came into the open again. It was not in the first edition of *The Garden of the Soul*, and when Douay men asked good Bishop Challoner the reason for this striking omission, he answered in his precise and formal way that his book was 'primarily designed rather as a kind of compendium for lapsed Catholics' or those unable to practise religion. Fervent Catholics would not only know the Jesus Psalter but know it by heart, and so not require to read it in his book. Except for liturgical prayers, such as the Rogation Litanies, and developments of them, the Jesus Psalter is the only form of prayer in the vernacular which has so persisted through the dark and dreary times of the Church in England.

The reasons for this popularity become apparent on analysis of the Psalter itself. They are concerned chiefly with the appeal of any kind of psalmody, the attractiveness of participation in vocal prayer, and a comprehensiveness of doctrine recognisable as a direct effect of the scholastic training and the even then wide influence of St Thomas Aquinas. We shall deal with all three points in turn.

Psalmody as such was always attractive to the English mind, in addition to its place as the official language of the Church. The



balance of strophe and anti-strophe, alliteration and assonance, all find a welcome in early English poetry, which took syllables into account, but depended largely on quantity for its metrical life. When therefore the sonorous Latin chant of Christianity's *Opus Dei* became the staple form of regular prayer, it too was very much loved. Any collection of English Psalters, such as that shown in 1946 at St John's College, Cambridge, will at once convince us not only that the Psalms were known and said or sung in all devout families and homes, but also that much loving labour was expended on them, systematically and willingly. To those who object that the interest was imported and not indigenous, we have to answer that in the great days of learning, particularly in the thirteenth century, no narrow bounds of district or nationality obtained, and what Europe knew was known to England, from the time of Bede and Alcuin to the day of More and Fisher.

This being so, a transition to an English form of the same type of prayer, though homely and not inspired by God in the way the Scriptures are, is easy to understand. Its date is not so easy to find. If by the middle of the sixteenth century its popularity was so firmly established, it must have been known and used for at least a generation before that; but not many English forms of prayer have come down to us from that time, only Latin prayers or translations of the classics among them, such as the *Imitation of Christ* or Thomas à Kempis on the Passion. The absence of archaic turns in the Jesus Psalter makes it modern and familiar to us, but its firm summary of Christian aspiration points to a much earlier origin even than the second generation of the sixteenth century. We can only surmise that it belonged to a lost vernacular cult dating from the late fifteenth century. The fact that the Psalter itself is a survival shows how strong was its hold upon the mind both of its own day and later; just as the Penitential Psalms find their place in every prayer-book, and the Psalms of Praise are included in the *Garden of the Soul*. So much for the appeal of psalmody in general.

In particular, the Jesus Psalter combines all the elements dear to vocal prayers of earlier days and of our own. It is arranged in a formation of threes and fives, just as the Rosary is made up of three sets of five Mysteries each. The Psalter carries this formation into its component parts also, having the same beginning for each and the same little chorus at the end of the five petitions forming one part. The beginning is that eulogy of the Holy Name of Jesus which all Catholics would know from the Scriptures used at Mass: 'In the Name of Jesus let every knee bow. . . .' It adjures every tongue to 'confess' and at once the response is evoked, 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus . . .' with a petition each time. The devotion to the Holy Name, as in the

prayers of St Bernard and again of St Bernardine of Siena, was very strong in England. The vocative case was especially appealing. The martyr priest, Roger Cadwallador, in his extremest agony, which was that of being drawn and quartered while yet able to feel this torture, could only exclaim, *Jesu, Jesu, esto mihi Jesu . . .* familiar prayer and dear, even in this terrible plight not leaving him without comfort. Of Richard Herst, the layman martyr of Lancashire, the records say, 'and *Bone Jesu* were the last words heard from his mouth. . . . ' Of many other martyrs, old and young, substantially the same is true. Well would the English people answer to the invocations of the Jesus Psalter, indeed.

Its first impetration is in each case followed up by an elaboration of the petition: 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, grant us grace to love thee . . . ' said three times, is then developed into, 'Jesus, grant us grace *truly* to love thee, for thy infinite goodness. . . . ' In another part (ninth petition): 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, grant us grace to remember death', becomes, 'Jesus, grant us grace *always* to remember *our* death . . . ' and so on, in each section. The sequence is in every way adapted to both the main theme and its development, in a way easy to follow and gripping to the poorest as well as to the most scholarly mentality: 'Thou art our sure rock of defence against all sorts of enemies. Thou art our ready grace, able to strengthen us to every good work. *Therefore* in all our sufferings, in all our weaknesses and temptations, we will confidently call upon thee. . . . ' In the rare cases which do not elaborate the petition immediately (fourteenth petition), there is an addition which lends weight to the meaning, so that the meditation may keep pace with the prayer which it is designed to frame: 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, grant us grace to fix our minds on thee', is continued by, 'Jesus, grant us grace to fix our minds on thee, especially in time of prayer, when we directly converse with thee'. Most of the petitions are self-explanatory, because of this simple system of leaving the petitioner in no doubt as to the full meaning of his prayer. 'Send us here our Purgatory', is an example: 'Vouchsafe to grant us those merciful crosses and afflictions which thou seest necessary for taking off our affections from all things here below'. The clear, plain, earnest tone is unmistakable; the economy of words is admirable, the slight rocking rhythm of the prose versicles is attractive even to a tired or a distracted mind; while the constant burden of the Holy Name corresponds to the use of the *Gloria Patri* in the Psalms of the Office of the Church.

Lastly, there is the summary of doctrine in the Jesus Psalter, reminiscent of the comprehensive prayers of St Thomas Aquinas, of all such the most immediate and intimate shafts sent directly to

God from the human heart, yet holding all Catholic belief in their wording, fully phrased and omitting nothing. In many places St Thomas prays this full-bodied kind of petition, as 'Do thou order my beginnings, direct and further my progress, complete and bless my ending' (*Prayer before Study*). Or again: '. . . Through the blessed and glorious Passion of thy Son, and through the hope I have had in thine own intercession, thou [here, our Lady] wilt ask for me from him pardon for my sins, and wilt guide me, as I die in the love of him and of thee, into the way of safety and salvation' (*Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary*). This was St Thomas in the thirteenth century, we must remember. In the later Psalter we have the synthetic, stair-like movement characteristic of that master mind, bent on stating the truth of God so clearly and so evenly that all must see it, given the light of Faith: 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, make us constant. . . . Jesus, make us constant *in faith, hope and charity*. Give us perseverance in all virtues, and a resolution never to offend thee'. Again: 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, enlighten us with spiritual wisdom. . . . Jesus, enlighten us with spiritual wisdom, *to know thy goodness*, and all *those things which are most acceptable to thee*'. Verse by verse, portion by portion, we are led up to the climax, where perfect love casteth out fear.

Nor is there wanting that warm glow of love that informs all the shorter prayers of St Thomas: 'Enable us, O God', says the Psalter, 'to work out our salvation with fear and trembling . . .'; and again: 'Then, dear Jesus, remember thy mercy, and turn not thy most amiable face away from us, because of our offences'. And another: 'Make us, O dear Redeemer, seriously weigh those severe words of thine, that he only who perseveres to the end shall be saved'. There is no stinting of the truth of God, no false comfort, no forgetting of 'Through how much pain and how little pleasure thou pressedst on to a bitter death. . . .' Yet the sweet Christian hope is never absent, even from the consideration of the Passion: '*Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio*', sings St Thomas, and the Jesus Psalter says: 'O beloved of our souls, take up all our thoughts here, that our eyes abstaining from all worldly vanities, may become worthy to behold thee face to face in thy glory for ever'.



## THE FOLLOWERS OF FOUCAULD

BY

L. C. SHEPPARD



It seems to be the lot of some of the servants of God that they begin to exert a powerful influence only after their death. One such case, of course, was Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux, unknown at death, of world-wide renown within twenty years afterwards (*before* her beatification). Such too seems to be the case with Fr Charles of Jesus—Charles de Foucauld, the missionary monk and hermit of the Sahara.

His way of life can have but a limited attraction though his teaching and methods have anything but a restricted application. It is perhaps the very relevance of his method of apostolate that is drawing men to study what he did, and in some cases to imitate him, with the necessary adaptations of course, in the task of proclaiming the Gospel by their life. *Crier l'Evangile par toute ma vie* was his watchword; if it were indeed done by all Christians how quickly would the world be conquered for Christ.

Père Voillaume, the prior of *Les Petits Frères de Jesus*, has written a short book<sup>1</sup> describing the mission and spirit of the modern followers of de Foucauld. At El-Abiodh-Sidi-Cheikh there is a flourishing community and in France there are two houses of women following a rule taking its inspiration from de Foucauld. The *Petits Frères* hope to found a house in a working class quarter of one of the big industrial towns of France this year.

Thirty years after his death then Fr Charles's projects are beginning to take shape. When the constitutions of the first fraternity at El-Abiodh (founded in 1933) were sent to Rome for examination one of the points about which revision was required was the name of the founder. The authorities would not agree that a man could found an institute after his death. If Fr Charles's name cannot figure as founder, he is surely the patriarch of these modern solitaries.

It is tempting to examine the three rules that he sketched at different periods each showing a further development of his method. But pride of place must be given to the point that was raised earlier on—the relevance of his form of apostolate to the present day.

Fr Charles in his evangelical simplicity would be the 'universal brother' and his disciples hope to follow in his footsteps and to introduce his method among the working-class population of France.

<sup>1</sup> Fr René Voillaume: *Les Fraternités du Père Foucauld: Mission et Esprit*. (Paris, Les Editions du Cerf; Oxford, Blackfriars Publications; 8s.)

Whether it be in the almost totally pagan (certainly never Christian) industrial centres—the suburbs of Paris, for instance, the docks of Marseilles or Bordeaux (Père Loew's *En Mission Proletarienne*, or the Abbé Godin and the Abbé Daniel's book *La France Pays de Mission?* are both relevant here)—or in the much de-Christianized countryside, there is ample need for such work as Fr Charles did in the Hoggar. The *Petits Frères* intend this year to open a house in a working-class area. In this penetration they are not the pioneers, for it has been shown in practice already that it is not sufficient to plant a church and presbytery (or even a parish hall) in an un-Christian area; such a process does not effect the conversion of the district—it gathers merely a few scattered Christians who had become buried in the mass of unbelief. Good has been done in this way, of course, but it has not been the good that was intended. What is required is not contact but penetration, penetration that can be effected only through a common life with the people it is intended to influence. So Père Loew has proved in Marseilles, so have the factory priests proved in Paris. But the *Petits Frères* will go a step further. They will live among these abandoned populations—as Père de Foucauld lived among the Touareg—and they will work alongside them too at the factory bench, but their work with all its hardships (they eschew capital, so that in addition to the poverty of their profession, they will suffer the insecurity that is inseparable from the other and perhaps harder form of poverty) will be undertaken primarily to live. Their aim is the contemplative life and it is in this that they differ from the modern missionaries mentioned above. Consequently the work they undertake must be compatible with such a life and be at the same time a witness to poverty.

Père Voillaume describes an experiment in Algeria. Some of the brothers have joined in a cooperative undertaking with the natives who are too poor separately to undertake the cultivation of their land. Each associate furnishes his share of work in the cultivation of a piece of land which has been assigned to the association collectively by the council of the tribe. The crop of vegetables and cereals is distributed equally among the members of the cooperative. This essay has so far been fruitful, and it has the further advantage of being in accordance with local traditions.

Christian common life requires common prayer. The life of the *Petits Frères*, followers of Foucauld, could not but be centred on the mystery of the Eucharist, the sacrifice and sign of the mystical body. Theirs is a fraternal community ' . . . based on evangelical realism, witnessing to Christ and his message by giving a living demonstration of what a Christian community ought to be.' The exterior form of life can be adapted to meet the circumstances of place and people

where it is lived; the principles on which it is based remain of course constant. In such communities the divine Office must obviously have a place. Père Voillaume insists on its importance, not only as a method of sanctifying the working day but as the means by which the Fraternity can take its part in the great movement of intercession and redemption of Christ living in his Church.

Given the importance of the Office and because *une bonne partie des frères est incapable de comprendre le latin* the language problem has to be faced. Père Voillaume asserts that to maintain the Office in Latin and impose it on all would be to expose the undertaking to the certain peril of formalism; the Office would become a burden and no longer fulfil the function of forming to the contemplative life. Nor can those who do not know Latin be kept away from the community prayer. 'The best solution would appear to be the recitation of the Office for all in the vernacular.'<sup>2</sup>

The coordination of the elements of the life of the *Petits Frères*, its activities, its spirituality, the formal renunciation of active ministry and of any effort at direct apostolate, the whole spirit of the rule, all aim at the formation and development of a contemplative life; the contacts of the brothers' daily work are not excluded from this end, rather are they one of the special means employed. It is a contemplative life lived in an intense spirit of eucharistic immolation; and this life is to be offered in the first place for those whose cross of daily labour and care the brothers share.

It will be seen then what is the essential novelty of the *Petits Frères* and how they differ from the old established contemplative orders. In place of the absence of exterior activity, the separation from the world, we find a contemplative life lived in the hurly-burly of the daily tasks of ordinary folk. Their spirituality, their rule teaches the *Petits Frères* to treat as the means of union with God those very things that have in the past been so often regarded as obstacles. These fraternities are contemplative, not because they establish their members in an exterior state conducive to contemplation but because they have at their disposition the required means for the end in view: a eucharistic life, fraternal charity, immolation of self, work. So may be formed the contemplative life in the soul; it is a real and continuing education. Such is this school of sanctity. It has of course its own risks; they must be seen clearly and faced courageously. Any great undertaking has an element of risk; Chris-

---

<sup>2</sup> 'C'est vers une réalisation progressive en ce sens, et dans la mesure où le permettent les règles liturgiques actuelles, que s'orientent, dès maintenant, les efforts des Fraternités.' One would have liked to have been told more about this. All the community presumably takes part in the recitation. Are the priests obliged to any other Office as well? If they are not it is a departure of great moment.



tian perfection has its own. As Père Voillaume wisely remarks, it is only mediocrity that avoids all semblance of risk.

This book is invaluable for an authentic interpretation and a true understanding of the significance of Père de Foucauld's life. It shows the relevance of that life to modern conditions anywhere.

---

## ST BENEDICT

'The special and chief task that seemed to have been given to him in the designs of God's providence was not so much to impose on the West the manner of life of the monks of the East, as to adapt that life and accommodate it to the genius, needs and conditions of Italy and the rest of Europe. Thus to the placid asceticism which flowered so well in the monasteries of the East, he added laborious and tireless activity which allows the monks 'to give to others the fruit of contemplation', and not only to produce crops from uncultivated land, but also to cultivate spiritual fruit through their exhausting apostolate. The community life of a Benedictine house tempered and softened the severities of the solitary life, not suitable for all and even dangerous at times for some; through prayer and work and application to sacred and profane sciences, a blessed peace knows not idleness nor sloth; activity and work, far from wearying the mind, distracting it and applying it to useless things, rather tranquillize it, strengthen it and lift it up to higher things. Indeed, an excessive rigour of discipline or severity of penance is not imposed, but before all else love of God and a fraternal charity that is universal and sincere. 'He so tempered the rule that the strong would desire to do more and the weak not be frightened by its severity; he tried to govern his disciples by love rather than dominate them by fear'.

—POPE PIUS XII  
(from the *Encyclical of March*, 1947).

# THE VENERABLE BATTISTA VERNAZZA 1497-1587

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'A LINK BETWEEN THE ENGLISH MARTYRS AND THE FLEMISH MYSTICS'



VENERABLE BATTISTA VERNAZZA is probably only known in this country to members of the religious Order to which she belonged and to those who have read Baron von Hugel's *The Mystical Element in Religion*. In it he studies the spiritual and mystical life of St Catherine of Genoa, as illustrating his theme, and to her life he adds notices of considerable length on two of her friends and disciples: Ettore Vernazza and his daughter Battista, whose spiritual life Catherine greatly influenced, and in both of them Baron von Hugel finds affinities and contrasts with the character and supernatural experiences of the saint. No one undertaking even a brief sketch of Battista's life could overlook his valuable work, but it is written from a special point of view, as showing forth the outcome of St Catherine's spirit on those two disciples of hers though he recognises that 'they are in no sense simple copies of her', and that their lives are in themselves worthy of record; indeed the life of the Venerable Battista, consulted for this sketch, bears the title: *Una Gloria di Genova*<sup>1</sup> and her father, Ettore, was both a man of eminent holiness and one of the most prominent citizens of Genoa, where in 1867 a statue was erected to his memory, as a public benefactor.

He was a lawyer, belonging to a noble family of the Genoese Republic, and Lord of Vernazza, Arvenza and Cogoletto, three villages situated in its territory. His wife, Bartolommea Ricci, was of the illustrious Florentine family of that name, which gave St Catherine Ricci to the Church.

It is to Battista that we owe a life of her father, written by her when she was 84 years of age. She tells us of the holy and happy married life of her parents, saying she had never heard one word of dissension exchanged between them, and she dwells gratefully on their care to bring up their children in piety, mentioning especially the examples of mortification given by her father . . . a mortification which her mother lovingly sought to moderate. The esteem in which Ettore was held by his fellow citizens led them to elect him as Chancellor of the 'Serenissima Repubblica'. He possessed a large

<sup>1</sup> By C. Antonio Boeri.

fortune and was one of the founders of the hospital for incurables in Genoa.

But his interest and his charity were by no means confined to his native city. On his visits to Rome he was painfully impressed by the number of beggars and by the misery which contrasted with the magnificence of the court of Leo X, and at Naples, perhaps the most pleasure-loving and most beautiful of Italian cities, he was especially struck by the wretched state of the prisons and the neglect in which criminals condemned to death were left, without any organized help and with no one to administer spiritual aid as they went on the way to execution. For all these evils he instituted remedial measures, and on his return to Genoa he formed with three companions 'The Company of St John the Baptist Beheaded', of which the aim was to take to heart in every way the welfare of prisoners, he and his friends accompanying them to the scaffold. Ettore's own death was to be that of a martyr of charity. But enough has been said to give an idea of the influence the life of such a father must have had on his children: an influence in which he was seconded by their saintly mother.

The eldest of their three daughters was born on April 15th, 1497, and the god-parents were two great friends of her father: St Catherine Fiesca-Adorno, and a learned lawyer, Dottore Tommaso Moro, after whom the child was christened Tommasa, a name she was later on to change to that of Battista. Her education and that of her two younger sisters Catetta (no doubt so called after her god-mother St Catherine) and Ginevrina, was such as was given to high-born ladies of the Renaissance, a period marked by a strong intellectual impulse and a passionate enthusiasm for the classics.

Besides Latin, Greek and in some cases mathematics, girls were expected to be proficient in music, to play the harp or the lute and to sing *canzoni*, sometimes of their own composition.<sup>2</sup> Among her various studies, religion, literature and music seem to have had Tommasa's preference and all through life she retained her taste for them. A story has come down to us of a little encounter she had with a music-master when but 10 or 11 years old, which shows that she had very early a decided will of her own. He had picked up a

<sup>2</sup> We have an example of Tommaso's composition at this time:

*Santissima mea Diva  
Questo meo cor ricevi;  
Che quando al sole apriva  
Le luci ai giorni brevi,  
Insin d'allor fè voto  
Con animo devoto  
Non mai, Madre adorata,  
Esser da Te sviata.*

Do thou, most holy Queen divine  
Receive my heart, I pray,  
For lo, when first these eyes of mine  
Opened to life's brief day  
Promised with love on fire that e'er  
That heart should own thy sway;  
Wherefore, sweet Mother, hear my prayer  
Let it ne'er from thee stray.



rumour of a great marriage in prospect for her and ventured to congratulate her on it, but her answer demonstrated her full consciousness that her own will would be the ultimate factor in this matter, and her determination to use it in all freedom. She may have known how her beloved god-mother, whose heart had been set from the age of 13 on entering among the Canonesses Regular of the Lateran in the convent of our Lady of Graces (St Maria delle Grazie), had been put off on account of her youth and at 16 had been given in marriage, against her will and for purely political purposes, to Giulano Adorno, of the great Guelph family of the name. The marriage, most suitable from a worldly point of view, had been a cause of intense suffering to Catherine. There was no fear that either Ettore Vernazza or Bartolommea would require such a sacrifice of their children. Their own married life was singularly blessed and Ettore's grief was great and sincere when his beautiful young wife was taken from him by death early in 1509, leaving him with three little girls, the eldest of whom had not attained her twelfth birthday.

There was no relation whom Ettore could ask to undertake the management of his household and the care of his children; and for him there could be no thought of giving them a step-mother. His own wish was to leave the world entirely and, placing his children under the care of nuns, to enter among the Canons Regular, but he was most disinterestedly advised by one of them to continue the life of active charity he was already leading. Nevertheless Ettore resolved to withdraw from the world at least in some degree, retiring to rooms in the hospital for incurables, where he devoted himself more than ever to their welfare.

His two eldest children he placed in the convent of St Maria delle Grazie, there to be educated as became their station, and the little Ginevrina he confided to the Cistercian nuns of the convent of St Andrew just outside the city gates, so that all three were within easy reach of their father. Possibly the separation of Ginevrina was because the Canonesses did not receive such young children. Ettore gave written directions stating that the child was to be free at the proper age 'to choose either to serve God in religion or to marry according to the rank of the testator', and due provision was made for her in either case. Later on she entered among the Cistercians, taking the name of Sr Maria Archangela.

Of these children Tommasa was the best able to understand what the loss of her mother meant and her grief was extreme, but like St Teresa of Avila, she turned to her heavenly Mother and exclaimed amidst her tears: 'O Mary, I have lost my mother—do *thou* be henceforth a tender mother to me'. Already she had conceived the desire to give her life to God in religion, though she had not men-

tioned her wish to her parents for fear of paining her mother; but probably she had confided her secret to Catetta, for the two little sisters were at one in their aspirations. We must remember how far more advanced both physically and mentally are the children of the south than those of our northern clime. Betrothals and even marriages between mere children were not infrequent at the period, especially among princely families.

Tommasa now spoke of her wish to St Catherine who was delighted to hear that this child, in whom she saw some reflection of herself, thought of entering the convent in which she had so longed to consecrate her own life to God.<sup>3</sup> 'O happy child', she exclaimed, 'on whom God has looked with so much favour—whom he chooses for his bride in that very monastery which I was not found worthy to enter. He calls you and you answer to his call. I now transmit to you the lesson I have been taught: let Jesus be in your heart, the remembrance of eternity in your mind, the will of God in your every action, and above all, love—all love to God who is all LOVE'.<sup>4</sup> Thus encouraged by her god-mother, the child spoke to her father who gave an unhesitating and even joyful consent. We hear of no such objections on the score of tender age as had been made in the case of St Catherine, objections which the nuns no doubt regretted having ever raised.

In 1510, on the feast of St John the Baptist, patron of the company formed by her father for the relief of prisoners, Tommasa, now 13 years of age, received the white habit of the Canonesses Regular of the Lateran and took the name of Battista. It was one of St Catherine's last joys on earth, for she died twelve weeks later on September 15th. Catetta followed her sister's example and became Sr Daniela, but we do not know at what date. She is mentioned in her father's will, made in 1517, as being a member of the community of St Maria delle Grazie. In that will he states that he has already given to his two daughters in that monastery 3000 Genoese pounds and has provided 200 pounds for the furnishing of their rooms, their habit, etc.

Before giving an account of Battista's religious life we will quote

---

<sup>3</sup> It was in the church of St Maria delle Grazie that Catherine had the spiritual experience which she calls 'conversion'. It was the grace to give her heart entirely to God after five years of a more or less worldly life in which she had tried to find some compensation for the want of happiness in her marriage. It is sad to think that the Canonesses were obliged to leave this church so full of hallowed memories when the suppression of monasteries took place under Napoleon in 1810. The convent has been converted into dwelling-houses and the church was used as a theatre. The nuns first found refuge in a Dominican convent, but in 1822 Archbishop Lambruschini assigned to them that of Sancta Maria di Passione, where they still carry on their life of prayer and praise.

<sup>4</sup> *Una Gloria di Genova*. C. Antonio Boeri.

what she tells us of the death of her father, and reading it we can realize the thrill of filial pride with which, at the age of 84, she recalled and handed down to posterity the story of Ettore's heroism:

'The plague being very severe in Genoa', she says (it was in 1524), 'he came to visit me and said to me: "I am determined in no manner to forsake the poor. Do you think I had better go about on horseback or on foot?" "Oh, Father", I said, "we are coming to the feast of the Baptist, and are at the highest heat, and you are determined to go amongst them!" And he said: "Is it my fate to hear such things from you? How truly happy I should be if I were to die for the poor"'. Then I, seeing so much fortitude in that holy soul, said to him: "Father, go". But he was not content with looking after the Lazaretto. I think he scoured the country far and wide. And hence he caught the infection. On the eve of the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, June 23rd, he confessed and communicated; and in three days he fell quietly asleep in the Lord.'

We have followed the translation of Baron von Hugel and must add a few of his words of comment: 'Rarely', he says, 'has so noble a finish been so nobly told. High on horseback he goes forth, the strong, sound-bodied, wholehearted man, deliberately sure of finding and bringing heaven, wheresoever pure love may be wanted and may joyously appear . . . joyously fruitful, amidst the very ghastliness of death . . . he himself had cast himself down and away into that deep common fosse, amongst the many thousands of his ever-obscure and now disfigured friends and fellow dead'.

Though no miracles have been attributed to Ettore Vernazza and the Church has not enrolled him among her canonised saints, we can but think of him as a martyr of charity, and perhaps the daughter's 'Father, go' demanded an act as heroic as the self-sacrifice of the father.

But we must return to the days when Battista entered the Canonesses Regular. We have a detailed description of her person in the life by Boeri, who declared it is the word-portrait given by Dom di Negro, who had known her. She was of middle height, well-proportioned, the hands and feet small, her complexion exceedingly fair, forehead broad, eyebrows finely pencilled, and her eyes of a light colour, nose rather long, and lips full, and her whole aspect expressive of gentleness and of a joyous sunshiny nature.

The daughter of Ettore Vernazza and the god-child of St Catherine must have been joyfully welcomed by the nuns. Among them were many whom she knew, though Limbania Fiesca, sister to St Cath-



erine, was already dead.<sup>5</sup> The lists of those professed at St Maria della Grazie contain the names of the most illustrious Italian families: Giustiniani, Colonna, Spinola, Doria, Pallavicino, Imperiale, Malaspina, Della Torre, etc. The Community was fervent and in it Battista found all she had hoped for: the life consecrated to divine praise, the Rule of St Augustine, based so entirely on charity, the spirit which counts those 'richer' and 'more happy' who are able to bear a fuller share of privation; the liberty of spirit which urges those who are bound to the Rule, to observe it 'not as slaves under the law but as free-born under grace'; all was congenial to the novice, who found her ideal so perfectly expressed in the life she had embraced. 'Rarely indeed', says Baron von Hugel, 'can a woman have been more emphatically in her place than Battista during her 77 years at St Maria della Grazie'.

From the very beginning of her religious life she seems to have laid self aside, so that the word of Isaias might have been applied to her: 'If thy own will is not found to speak a word . . . then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord'. She was a lover of silence and recollection, but ever ready to forego her own desires in order to serve her sisters. Endowed with both spiritual and mental gifts of a high order, and also with many of those minor talents by which pleasure may be given to others, possessing great charm of manner, and that capacity for love which elicits love, and moreover a judgment far beyond her years, it is not to be wondered at that she won love and confidence so that her company was often sought and her counsel asked by those older than herself. She began to realise her power, to take a natural satisfaction in the affection given her, and to allow it to occupy her heart and mind in a way which she felt to be incompatible with the complete surrender of her heart to him who was calling her to live for him alone. There was a struggle: in her commentary on the *Pater Noster* she looks back on it and exclaims: 'Thou knowest, my only Good, how long I tried to bargain with thee, wanting to keep a divided heart; but thou who art omnipotent didst vanquish me'. And again: 'In my youth there was a combat between thee and me . . . between thy love for me and my ingratitude towards thee. And yet deep down in my heart thou knowest that I found comfort in these words that seemed to be said within me: "His Majesty is stronger than thou. . . . He will be the Victor".'

---

<sup>5</sup> Limbania was one of the foundresses of the convent, which was approved of by Nicholas V in 1451. She was named after St Limbania, a young virgin who, according to a legend, came from Cyprus in a small sailing vessel, and after a miraculous journey, landed at Genoa, where she entered an Augustinian convent and lived a life of extraordinary penance and contemplation.

Battista's struggle reminds us of the difficulty St Teresa felt in giving up too numerous visits to the parlour, where she took pleasure in conversing with the many over whom the very beauty of her character had given her an ascendancy. Like Teresa, the Augustinian novice used her power to lead souls to God, yet for her too there was something in her intercourse with them that at this phase of her spiritual life impeded the upward flight of her soul, which God was calling to close union with himself and to the renunciation of all that was lower than himself. 'Nothing pleases me except my God', she was to write later on, 'and it would be grievous to me to embrace, even for one single hour, anything but him'. Like St Teresa too, once she had made her sacrifice, her soul was inundated with consolation and she advanced rapidly in the way of perfection. '*Exultavit ut gigas ad currendem viam*', says her biographer. From her childhood she had an intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and when she was being taught any work, such as embroidery, in which she afterwards excelled, she would exclaim: 'Oh, when I am grown up and can do my work alone I shall take it to the church and work at the feet of Jesus'. In the convent she was constantly found there; as soon as she was free from other duties she hastened to the church, so that it might be said of her that she had chosen it for her dwelling place (*puo dirsi di lei aver fissati la sua mansione diletta a piè de' santi altari.*)

It is recorded in the annals of the first convent of Carmelite nuns in France that the French novices were astonished to see some of the old Spanish nuns establish themselves with their spinning-wheel before the altar, evidently absorbed in prayer during their work. . . . (a custom which it cost them much to abandon). We do not know if Battista was able to fulfil her childhood's wish to do likewise, but we are told that she spent long hours before 'Gesù Sacramentato', and when asked how she occupied her time, she would answer: 'I adore him, I bless him, I make reparation to him for all the injuries he has suffered for love of us'. The hours between the midnight Matins and Prime were spent by her in prayer. Her thoughts were so centred on God that when she came from a parlour, or left business demanding attention, on her return to the church she was at once free from distracting thoughts, or any remembrance of the affairs which had occupied her. 'Our thoughts are precious to the Lord', she would say, 'and must all be given to him'. 'For the thought of a man shall give praise to Thee; and the remainder of the thought shall keep holiday to Thee' (*Psl. 75.*) To keep God ever in her thoughts she adopted several little practices which she carried out faithfully and with the liberty of spirit which marked her spiritual life. Thus as she sat down to table she would raise her eyes to Heaven with an aspiration towards the heavenly food given us in the Holy Eucharist and in the Word of

God, saying: '*Panem supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*'; meeting her sisters in the cloister or on the stairs, she would greet them with the words of St Augustine, who would have those who follow his Rule live with 'hearts uplifted': '*sursum cor habeant*'. Another means to keep her heart 'in touch' with God was the constant reading of the Sacred Scriptures; she always carried in her pocket a copy of the New Testament, and when she had charge of the kitchen and it was her duty to distribute the portions for the refectory, she would, in spare moments, read a sentence or a paragraph which would minister food for her soul. Her writings later on show how she had impregnated her mind with the Scriptures; she not only studied them, but 'pondered them in her heart' in order to discover the secrets of the works of her Lord and Master, scrutinising with eyes illuminated by love all his actions, that they might become the models of her own, re-reading them that his words might be to her springs of life and light.

So during these earlier years she prepared her soul for the greater graces, the clearer illuminations, which were to be bestowed on her, for at this period we do not hear of the ecstasies, the miracles, the spirit of prophecy, which illustrated her later life, but we are told of her charity, her readiness to serve others, her love of prayer, recollection and silence, her detachment from her own will, her perfect obedience and her extraordinary fidelity to Rule, outstanding even in such a fervent Community as that of St Maria delle Grazie.

At the age of 30 she was appointed Novice-Mistress, an office for which she was eminently suited; perhaps this could not be better proved than by the fact that it was said of her that her exactitude in every point was all that could be expected of the most fervent novice, for she never presumed an exception from any point of Rule, even when her multiple duties, her large correspondence (she was consulted on all sides), and as time went on, the infirmities of old age, seemed to demand some relaxation from the strictness of observance.

Two or three instances exemplifying her spiritual guidance have come down to us. On one occasion a novice asked her to pray that she might acquire the virtue of humility. 'Yes, I will pray', was the answer, 'but do you seek *love*; if you find it, humility will follow, for one who loves seeks the glory of the Beloved, rather than her own'. To another who came to her troubled by scruples and in great anguish of mind she said: 'Leave reflection of all this to me . . . do you rest peacefully in God'. One of her daughters desirous of being taught some 'spiritual exercises' for the time of thanksgiving after Holy Communion ventured to ask Battista how *she* spent the time, but the answer was brief: '*Tenui eum, nec dimittam*'; 'I have found my Beloved and I hold him close pressed to my heart, never to let him go'. 'Oh, sisters,' she would sometimes say, '*Gesù è sempre pronto*



. . . Jesus is ever ready . . . we can unite ourselves to him at every moment . . . we have but to will it'.

Her zeal for the divine Office and her musical talent enabled her to train others in the chanting of the divine praises, and it was a task she loved; she was all solicitude, all attention for everything connected with the canonical Hours and she would have every phrase, every word perfectly rendered. She had both a good voice and keen musical perception and knew how to inspire enthusiasm for the Plain Song and for the duty which must ever be paramount in the life of a Canoness Regular: the service of the choir.<sup>6</sup> In the early part of the 16th century the elaborateness of the polyphonic music had reached a pitch which nearly caused its complete banishment from churches, and though it was no doubt in use at St Maria delle Grazie on feasts, we can imagine that Battista must have welcomed the changes introduced by Palestrina, whose Mass of Pope Marcellus was written in her life-time. It is pleasant also to hear that she would sometimes play the mandoline to recreate her novices. These were years of peace in the quiet cloister, but outside its walls there were constantly increasing troubles both in Church and State.

Italy was at that time the theatre of the struggle for supremacy between Charles V and Francis I. The very year in which Battista became Novice Mistress witnessed the sacking of Rome by French troops under the Constable of Bourbon. During these wars Genoa changed hands more than once and in 1522 it was pillaged by the Imperialists who remained its masters. Its great citizen, Andrea Doria, took the side of the French and defeated the Spanish in 1524, but four years later, finding that the promises made to the republic were not being fulfilled, he turned to Charles V and in another naval battle defeated the French who were driven from the state. Doria then restored the old republican form of government, of which his abilities and the confidence of his fellow-citizens made him the real leader, but the haughtiness of his nephew, Giannettino, offended the proud Genoese families, so that the republic was soon the scene of internal dissension. In 1547, Gian-Luigi de' Fieschi, who was an hereditary foe of the Dorian clan, headed a conspiracy. After a banquet given in one of the Fieschi palaces, the city was surprised at night by cries of 'Fiesco' and 'Libertà', while bands of armed men invaded the streets. In the ensuing disorders both Gian-Luigi and Giannettino lost their lives, but Andrea remained master of the situation and took

---

<sup>6</sup> A writer who, in 1906, visited St Maria di Passione (the convent to which the community of St Maria delle Grazie passed in 1822) attributes the perfection with which the divine Office is still chanted by the Canonesses to the tradition established by Venerable Battista Vernazza in the sixteenth century.

a bloody revenge on the conspirators. He was himself assassinated in 1560 by one of the Gonzaga family.

The daughter of Ettore Vernazza cannot but have taken a deep interest in the fortunes of the state her father had served so well, and the fate of the Fieschi would naturally affect the god-daughter of St Catherine. The monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie seems to have escaped all injury and Battista, in a letter written in 1576, tells how 'with regard to possessions, quantities of these were sent out of Genoa; great masses of them were deposited in the monasteries . . . and yet never was even a trifle taken. On this latter point, we of this convent can bear witness. For although so much property and money was brought to the Monastery delle Grazie, that it became difficult to move about the house because of the quantity of cases and stray boxes deposited there, nevertheless not even to the poor carriers who brought them was the slightest violence done, although they had to pass through all those drawn and raised swords; nor was a single word said to us nuns, who appeared in the gateway to receive the goods.'

The letter in which this passage occurs was written four years before Battista's admirable account of her father's life and death, but in it, as in the 'Life', her filial pride for her noble father is shown, for she attributes the moderation of the people, at the time of the episode she is recounting, to the improvement in the social and moral standard of the citizens of Genoa, due to Ettore's work among them; for that work had been philanthropic in the best and highest sense of the word, not only by exercising charity and conferring benefits during one of the most troubled periods of the Genoese Republic, but by fostering self-respect and regard for the public good.

Battista tells us how at a time 'when men went about the city with their swords drawn and erect and spoke injurious words to those of the opposite party, yet the women went and came to visit each other and frequented Mass whether they belonged to one party or the other; and the greater number of gentlewomen went out of Genoa, accompanied by their daughters, passing through the very midst of the city and going down to the wharf to get on board their boats, and yet never was any discourtesy shown them'.

But during the long period of Battista's life (1497-1587) far greater issues were at stake than the welfare of Genoa or even than the question of the supremacy of France or Spain, and as a devoted daughter of the Church, nothing touched her so deeply as the purity of the Faith. It was the age of the great religious revolts which was to tear so many nations from Catholic unity—the age of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin—and not even Italy escaped unscathed from the flood of infidelity.

We know that many earnest souls were troubled and bewildered by the rigorous views of the French 'reformer', and the subtle disputes then current on such subjects as Justification by Faith. We might mention the learned and saintly Colonna, the devoted friend of our Reginald Pole, towards whom she acted the part of a mother during his exile, while he in return became her spiritual director, saving her from the perplexity raised in her mind by the Calvinistic preaching of Bernardino Occhino who had at first been looked on as a true and devoted son of the Church. Battista's love for souls and zeal for God's glory (and indeed they are one) is thus expressed in a prayer in which she protests that she finds an incomparably greater joy in petitioning that his Majesty may fill the whole earth and that all may be one in him than in praying for herself. 'And', she concludes, 'not only do I desire that all should have what I so thirst for, but that to those more capable than I of promoting thy glory, thou shouldst give thy graces more abundantly.' We can imagine the sorrow with which she saw her god-father, Tommaso Moro, the friend of her father and her god-mother, St Catherine, lapse into heresy. He who at her baptism had professed the Catholic Faith in her name, now wrote to her repudiating the Church's teaching on several points of doctrine, including the Real Presence, Public Prayer and Psalmody and Religious Vows . . . all indeed which she held dearest and to which she had consecrated her life. Her answer was a masterly one: 'There is in it', says Baron von Hugel, 'a successful, very difficult combination of filial respect and of lofty reproof; and there runs through all the argumentation a sort of legal hard-headedness, entirely in its place on the lips of the lawyer's daughter in dealing with her lawyer correspondent.' We will only give the passage concerning vows: 'According to my humble judgment, that thing cannot be called slavery which a soul elects for itself, by an act of free choice alone, and with a supreme desire. And in this matter you really can trust me, since here I am, living under the very test of experience, and yet I have no consciousness of being bound to any obligation, so little indeed, that if I had full licence from God to do all those things of which I have deprived myself by vow, I would do neither more nor less than what I am actually doing; indeed no taste for anything beyond these latter things arises within me. How then do you come to give the name of servitude to that which gets embraced thus with supreme delight? Perchance you will say: "Not everyone is thus disposed". My dear sir, he who does not find this inclination within him, let him not execute it. Neither Christ nor his Church constrain anyone in this matter'. In Battista's Life by Boeri we are told that Tommaso read the letter in the presence of one of his heretical friends, who seeing him greatly moved as he perused it



and tears starting to his eyes, begged him to read no more of what might disturb him in the beliefs he had adopted, but he pleaded in vain, and soon after Battista had the joy of knowing that her god-father had returned to the Church and that in his old age he embraced what he had once regarded as 'slavery', becoming a priest and entering the Order of Canons Regular. The letter to her god-father was written while she was Novice-Mistress and still comparatively young, for at the age of 40 she was appointed Procuratrix and it is said that in spite of the difficult times, she so managed that the community suffered neither want nor privation during her tenure of that office.

(*To be concluded*)

## REVIEWS

THE MANIFOLD MASS AND THE INVISIBLE CHILD. By C. C. Martindale, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 5s.)

Not the least intriguing feature of a new book by Fr Martindale is its dedication, and this latest book which is, in spite of the lengthy title, rather a short book, has two dedications. This is not mere caprice on the part of the author for he has given us two books in one and, of course, each must have its own felicitous dedication.

The obscurity of the long title is resolved when one realises that the conjunction is uniting the titles of two separate and quite different books. The first, *The Manifold Mass*, is written in the form of a play, but a play to be read. It is a charming whimsy to which the author, happily, gives us the key, for at times the flights of fancy are somewhat bewildering to a less poetic mind. 'St Gertrude relates', Fr Martindale tells us, 'how she watched our Lord celebrating his own High Mass in heaven. We, in our small way, shall consider ourselves permitted to see not only through stone or wooden walls, but into minds of all sorts, and even, to some degree, into the minds and actions of the heavenly court itself. Mass is manifold, and offers itself through creation, nor certainly do we forget that part of that creation is the sacred humanity of Christ.'

When the curtain rises we hear the hymn of the worship of the solitudes in which the mountains, the snows and the fir trees sing the praises of the Creator. This hymn is filled with lovely poetic phrases, the title itself, the snows 'unrippled seas of crystal', and the trees 'unconquered, unregarding the shattering shocks of time'. This is the prelude to a festival Mass in the Austrian Alps and to its solemn counterpart in heaven. There is much Austrian *gemütlichkeit* among the simple peasants and, on the celestial plane, a certain frivolity among the little angels. However, it is all very charming and helps us to share a little in St Gertrude's vision.

The second book, *The Invisible Child*, has not quite the same simple charm, though it is still very pleasing. Its theme is similar to the first, the interpenetration of the supernatural with the natural, the invisible with the visible, which is shown in a series of short stories in which the Christ Child appears in different centuries to such varied people as SS. Perpetua and Felicitas, a sixth century recluse near Paris, a medieval Franciscan, a sixteenth century Kaffir boy and a twentieth century roistering seaman.

K. M.

THE RUSSIAN RELIGIOUS MIND: KIEVAN CHRISTIANITY. By George P. Fedotov. (Harvard University Press; London, Cumberlege; 32s. 6d.)

As he is at pains to make clear in his introduction, the word 'mind' of Professor Fedotov's title has not a mainly intellectual connotation but is used in the sense of the whole content of consciousness: he has embarked on a history, not of Russian religious thought, but of Russian religious consciousness on its subjective human side; and this first volume (complete in itself) deals with the subject during the Kievan epoch, i.e., from the conversion to Christianity of Vladimir to the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. The enterprise and the book are most welcome, especially from one as qualified as Professor Fedotov, who was for years on the staff of the Russian theological institute in Paris and is now a professor at the Russian seminary in New York. There has been a certain amount of fugitive writing on the subject in English, and it has of course received attention in the books of Dr Nicholas Zernov and in such works as Nicholas Arsenyev's *Holy Moscow* and Mme Gorodetzky's *Humiliated Christ in Modern Russian Thought*: but that somebody should undertake for Russia, in the same spirit if not at the same great length, what Brémond did for France, was overdue. No doubt Christian religious consciousness can be subdivided almost indefinitely on a basis of civilizations and cultures, but there would seem to be four main streams, the Greek, the Roman (in the sense of Western), the Eastern (or Syrian) and the Russian. French religious consciousness, for instance, is a species developed within the Roman stream; but the Russian, though a derivative of the Byzantine Greek, developed for centuries almost in isolation within the wide borders of Rus and Muscovy, and is a genus on its own.

The first of the four parts of this work is concerned with the religious background of the Russians, viz., pre-Christian paganism and the religion of Byzantium. To the first Professor Fedotov concedes more continuing influence than most Western Christian writers are disposed to allow among other peoples, except such as the Ethiopians (whose religious consciousness developed—if it can be said to have developed—in isolation from its Egyptian Greek parent). About the definitive influence of Byzantium there can of course be no question: the people of the Kievan state received Christianity from Constantinople at the end of the tenth century, and 'the whole Russian mind and heart were shaped by this Eastern Christian mould. After 1054

official ecclesiastical relations with Western Catholic Europe became practically impossible: after the Mongolian conquest of 1240 the political and cultural ties with the West were almost severed. These two facts are the source of both the originality and the limitations of Russian culture; both of its greatness and its flaws'. But with Greek Christianity it did not receive the Greek language. What was wanted was translated into Slavonic (mostly in the lands of the Southern Slavs), and if the whole of the Byzantine liturgy and canon law, all the New Testament, the Psalter, and much of the Old Testament (and biblical apocrypha) and numerous legends of the saints were thus early received, Professor Fedotov makes clear how very much of importance was wanting of the works of the Greek fathers. And if one of the two doctors who most deeply influenced Russian Christianity was St John Chrysostom, the other was St Ephrem the Syrian (whose works underwent a double translation).

In his second part Professor Fedotov examines the life and work of scholars and saints, and first of the three Byzantines, Clement Smoliatich, St Cyril of Turov, and Hilarion of Kiev, the second being one of the great preachers and 'a unique example of theological devotion in ancient Russia'.<sup>1</sup> But it is among the saints rather than scholars that the religious ideal is more clearly expressed, and Professor Fedotov examines some of them under the heading of 'kenoticism', ascetic ideals, and eschatology. The royal brothers SS. Boris and Gleb, who suffered (for purely political reasons) violent death innocently and without resisting, were at once seen by the people as martyrs, bearers of a Christlike passion: the Greek ecclesiastical authorities resisted this new ideal, and did not readily confirm the popular canonization (Pope Benedict XIV made no difficulty about doing so when it was brought to his notice seven hundred years later). The 'kenotic' poverty and humility of St Theodosius Pechersky are a bridge to the examination of ascetic ideals, for Theodosius completed and enlarged the work of St Antony Pechersky (a very different, dour character) in founding the monastery of the Caves at Kiev in the middle years of the eleventh century: he widened and enlarged that work, literally as well as figuratively, and taught physical and spiritual service of the poor and needy to be of the essence of monastic life. The saints written of in the Kiev *paterikon* on the whole illustrate the narrower, more extravagant school of Antony, which may have had its inspiration from Mount Athos; but the ideas of St Theodosius clearly derive from St Sabbas and the Palestinian monks, and from St Theodore's Studion. St Abraham of Smolensk, who has a chapter to himself, is an almost unique figure in Russian

---

<sup>1</sup> This Cyril is one of the score of 'after 1054' Russian saints recently included in the kalendar of the Russian Catholics; so is Abraham of Smolensk, mentioned below. Vladimir, Olga, Boris and Gleb, and Antony and Theodosius Pechersky have always been in the Catholic Ruthenian kalendar.



hagiology, but his eschatology is characteristic of the mind of his people. It is well set out in the 'Sermon of the Celestial Powers', which is quite probably Abraham's composition, wherein mercilessness is represented as the worst of sins and the consummation of the Last Judgment is the transfiguration of the physical earth.

The third part is called 'The Ordinary Christian', and its first chapter, on 'The Ritualism of the Clergy', provides some curious and unhappy reading. For the religion of the laity Professor Fedotov has recourse chiefly to certain formal admonitions (including that of Prince Vladimir Monomakh to his sons) and to the chronicles. This is the longest section of the book and the most interesting, both because of its intrinsic importance and the unfamiliarity of its contents. These cannot be summarized adequately in a review; but compared with Greek patterns, e.g., the Hundred Chapters of Pseudo-Gennadius, the Russian admonitions are distinguished by 'a certain warmth of tone, the predominance of the *Agape* motive over *Phobos*, and the greater development of liturgical and ritual prescriptions. . . . This is the general impression. . . .' But the fundamental Byzantine contradiction between the 'Church of the Desert' and the 'Church of the Empire' is at work, and in the chronicles can be seen a progressive deterioration from a high ideal of Christian life, with the breaking of secularism into politics accompanied by the worldly concepts of honour, glory and revenge, 'the recession of the Cross'.

After several chapters devoted to the *Tale of Igor's Campaign*, wherein Christian influence seems so slight, and to heathen survivals, Professor Fedotov in a final section seeks to unify the evidence he has previously analysed; he sums up the feeling for the religious significance of the created world and beauty, the importance given to history, with its eschatological trend, the moderate ideal of asceticism and the absence of mystical contemplation, the ethical dualism of severe and mild, fear and love, the emphasis on social ethics, and the role of the state and religious nationalism. Kievan Russia, he concludes, 'was never dimmed in the memory of the Russian nation. In the pure fountain of her literary works anyone who wills can quench his religious thirst; in her venerable authors he can find his guide through the complexities of the modern world. Kievan Christianity has the same value for the Russian religious mind as Pushkin for the Russian artistic sense: that of a standard, a golden measure, a royal way'.

This summary of the contents of *The Russian Religious Mind* may give some idea of its scope, but it can give none of the ease with which Professor Fedotov handles his materials, of his deep-minded tolerance, and of his attractive and objective presentation of much unfamiliar matter. This is a work of scholarship that can be read by the ordinary reader as well as the student. It is an important book; and the importance of the work will increase in geometrical progression as other volumes are added.

DONALD ATTWATER.

BLESSED ALIX LE CLERC. By Margaret St L. West. (Douglas Organ; 2s. 6d.)

A new *beata* might easily be lost in the crowd, and since Alix le Clerc is important in twentieth century Europe a brief biography published at the time of her beatification is particularly welcome. Over three hundred years ago—she died in 1622—she was campaigning, and campaigning is the word, in the cause of women. She was neither a Joan of Arc nor an Elizabeth Fry. She was a teacher. And she was also a saint, so her work still lives. For this twofold reason she is particularly important today. Her Order was an innovation in 1600, for the work of teaching was not an appendage or an after-thought, but an essential part of the life. 'Education was not to be an accessory for its members, since it was in order to become excellent educators that they wished for the religious life and rules of enclosure.' So with Peter Fourier she worked to evolve a way of life in which prayer and work were integrated. The education of women was not conceived as an attempt either to restore the dignity of woman or to give her equality with man. The phrase, 'blue-stocking', had no literary connotation till a hundred and fifty years later and was only applied to women fifty years later still. Alix le Clerc and Peter Fourier just wished to give women their natural rights and there was no question of education drawing the women away from their homes. On the contrary, mothers must be themselves educated if they are to train their children. 'Uneducated women do more harm than uneducated men, because of the all-important part played by the mother in the upbringing of her children.'

For these reasons among others Alix Le Clerc commands our attention today and Miss West has done a service in bringing her before us in a workmanlike fashion. We are told the plain facts of her life in clear perspective; the background against which she worked, her own origins, the influence of Peter Fourier and above all her aims and ideals. Perhaps it is only to be expected that we should find ourselves still curious at the end of the book. That is because so many subjects have, of necessity, been mentioned only to be dismissed. Two of these merit special consideration: the importance of 'work'—teaching or whatever it might be—together with the divine office in the life of religious of the twentieth century; and 'higher' education for Catholic women. A book could be written on each of these subjects.

Here and there the character of the French sources creeps through into the English style, and the account of Alix's 'interior' life is couched very largely in familiar conventional terms which half deaden the meaning. There is also a riot of commas, printer's or author's it is impossible to tell, but certainly superfluous. These together with the dust cover which, presumably unintentionally, portrays Alix and her children as dark skinned, are the only defects in a book which is a brave attempt to record in a short space the history of a saint and her foundation, the Canonesses of St Augustine, both

of which are of great importance in the life of the Church in the twentieth century.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

FATHER ALLAN. By J. E. Hutcheon. (C.T.S.; 3d.)

BLESSED EDMUND CAMPION. By Wilkinson Sherren. (Douglas Organ; 2s. 6d.)

Reading these two short accounts together one is struck by how much there was in common between the Jesuit martyr and the Hebridean priest Fr Allan Macdonald. Each was poet and scholar and might have had a brilliant career had he wished; each knew much of the world at large, and left it to spend his life for a handful of souls in conditions of great hardship heroically borne. The parallel cannot be pushed too far, but the beatified martyr and the remote island priest, whose name is almost a household word in the West Highlands more than forty years after his death, both gave witness to the transcendence of work for God over all other things. Their qualities shine out even when the writing which records them is poor in quality. In the present case Blessed Edmund Campion has been happier in his biographer who has told the main facts of his life in colloquial prose, interwoven with apt quotations from the martyr's own letters. There is a remark on p. 20 about the activity of Orders and Congregations other than the Society of Jesus which is inaccurate and unjust. Father Allan's biographer might have profitably given more information about him. As it is much of the space is filled by the type of sentimental romanticism which used to be known as 'Celtic twilight'. The mist is thick but the figure of the famous parish priest of Eriskay cannot be wholly obscured and the pamphlet will no doubt, by its very unsatisfactoriness, send readers in search of something better.

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

SAINT AUGUSTINE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY. By Rev. James Duff, M.A., Ph.D. (Browne and Nolan; 8s. 6d.)

This work is intended to give students of Latin a suitable textbook by abridging the *Confessions*; theological or philosophical passages which are thought likely to be beyond the reach of readers unequipped for such speculation are omitted. It would be satisfactory to have a text which could be used to introduce senior forms to St Augustine without involving too great digression from the curriculum which examinations demand. Dr Duff's choice of passages would serve admirably if presented in a less ambitious form. As it is the book is unnecessarily expensive through the inclusion of much that is not essential. The introduction of nearly fifty pages is largely repetition of facts present in the Latin text and in the English summaries which preface each section of the latter. The same repetitiveness appears in the thirty or so pages of notes at the end. The introduction might have been defended to some extent, if it had given more general background, or if it had been written in a way to whet the reader's appetite. The book wakens one fear acutely, that it may be used by, or for, something more than schoolboys, as a short cut which will



bypass the greatest parts of the *Confessions* without a thought of their existence. A. R.

ALL MY DAYS FOR GOD. Reflections . . . from Saint Alphonsus. II Sexagesima—Pentecost. Selected and Edited by J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R. (Gill, Dublin; 6s. 6d.)

This is the second of the four volumes designed to cover the liturgical year with suitable meditations from the writings of the founder of the Redemptorist Congregation. The Archbishop of Armagh recommends it to the clergy and laity alike as a solid foundation for prayer and devotion. It would be a mistake to expect the spiritual writings of St Alphonsus to be merely his own mental excogitations. Even a canonized Doctor of the Church could not thus hold the reader effectively for a year of prayer. These reflections are full of references to the writers who had preserved the spiritual tradition to the time of this post-Reformation saint. St Augustine, St Bernard, St Gertrude, St Matilda, St Thomas, St Aloysius, St Teresa—they are all here and many others to encourage the reader to leave the words below and to leap up into the bosom of God. P. S. J.

THE VOICE OF A PRIEST. By Edward Leen, C.S.Sp. (Sheed & Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This is a collection of addresses by the late Fr Edward Leen edited with a biographic introduction and appreciation by Fr Bernard J. Kelly, C.S.Sp. There are two divisions—the author's: Religious Ideals and Christian Ideals; but within these the sermons are arranged in chronological order by the Editor who also provides the titles. There are sermons on Grace and the Virtues, Actual Grace, the Sovereignty of God, the Battle, the Victory, St Thomas Aquinas, the Episcopacy, etc.—

Fr Kelly considers that the first two sermons reveal the core of Fr Leen's spiritual doctrine: Christian life as a warfare, Grace as God's aid in man's striving after fulness. These themes give unity to the work and a many-sided view of what was a personal problem and experience for the author. Although to understand Fr Leen's mind one must read his other works—for these are special addresses and usually for religious—nevertheless, as the Editor says, this is a human document, and is instructive as such as well as for its doctrine. For the author is acutely aware of the corruption of human nature, of the deep-rootedness of evil tendencies in fallen nature, of the need for denial and death to self. There is an excellent address to some newly-professed religious (p. 102) on the illusion of the young that they have achieved perfection before they have begun, because they have not been tried by the disorder of life. The real test is in the circumstances of life which are not according to our will. That is where real union with God is achieved, not in prayer even, certainly not in the careful testing of the novitiate: 'it is living our life in a certain way that makes it spiritual . . . not thinking, nor mediating, nor even praying, not attendance at Mass nor receiving the Sacra-

ments . . . these are all but means to concrete, practical, spiritual oneness with God. . . . To walk with God means to be in sympathy with God . . . to share God's views. . . . Real spirituality postulates a radical transformation. . . . We grow like God by disciplining ourselves to act like God. . . . ' If at times phrases of unexpected severity come from his lips like that in which he says that there is a positive opposition between grace and nature or his castigation of governments and politicians for neglecting Christ—unexpected from one who acknowledges his debt to St Thomas both explicitly and implicitly in these pages—it is because he has such a deep awareness of the meaning of grace on the one hand, and the present condition of nature and man's call to supernatural life on the other. Grace is the source of that life of abounding vitality, the only life for man. At every moment human life must depend upon actual or habitual grace and the great evil is the assertion of man's independence of God, freely setting his own standards of life. Human nature is seen not as an abstract essence but in a state in which grace transforms it through and through. It is not merely corrupted, fallen, but simply as nature it is opposed to the divine because in fact it has been ordained to a supernatural end. While the essential goodness of nature and its tendencies and the possibility of naturally good actions are not denied, that natural order is seen as dependent upon the supernatural and inevitably involved in it. If these distinctions are only implied it is because the viewpoint is total and experiential.

The Editor sees the last sermon on the saints as indicating a later tranquillity which was not present when some of the earlier books were written. For a certain stoical trend is apparent sometimes, an acute awareness of the struggle, an impatience with failure to attain the ideal. War is for Peace, Fr Leen says more than once, but he was aware of the struggle because he was so aware of the demands made on nature by Grace. His sermons on the Sovereignty of God, on Grace and the Virtues, on Actual Grace bear witness to his awareness of man's dependence on God. In the end that dependence means only peace.

DAMIAN MAGRATH, O.P.

# DOMINICAN STUDIES

Interest in scholastic thought and method, and especially in the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, continues to increase in English-speaking countries. This fact has suggested a periodical dealing with these and allied subjects. The English Dominican Province therefore has pleasure in

announcing

## A QUARTERLY REVIEW

which will treat of Biblical, historical and systematic theology, all branches of philosophy and texts and questions relating to cultural and ecclesiastical history. The first issue will appear in

### JANUARY, 1948

*Price:* SIX SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE NET

*Annual Subscription:* ONE GUINEA OR \$5

BLACKFRIARS PUBLICATIONS

ST GILES

OXFORD



## Britain's Greatest Catholic Book Centre

NEW & SECOND-HAND  
BOOKS

Read Duckett's Register.  
The Catholic Literary  
Monthly. 3d. per copy; 4/-  
per annum, post free

*Books sent all over the World*

**Duckett**  
140 STRAND, W.C.2  
Phone: TEMple Bar 3008  
Telegrams:  
Gallows, Estrand, London

*Ready September . . . .*

## A ROSARY CHAIN

BY

S. M. DOMINIC, O.P.

The verses for each mystery  
of the Rosary are formed  
from the words of Scripture  
and the Breviary. The book  
is printed on hand-made  
paper with a frontispiece by

Neri di Bicci

*Price 5/6 net*

BLACKFRIARS  
PUBLICATIONS  
: OXFORD :

## Westminster Cathedral Chronicle

and Diocesan Gazette

*[with 4 pages art-paper illustrations]*

**THE CHRONICLE** is published monthly and has become not only THE London Catholic monthly, but also an organ of national importance as the vehicle of the Cardinal Archbishop's pronouncements and matters of universal Catholic interest with a distinguished range of contributors. It may be obtained post free for a year by sending your name and address and six shillings (6/-) to The Editor, Westminster Cathedral Chronicle, Archbishop's House, S.W.1.

*Other Publications:*

Homage to Newman 2/6,  
England's New Cardinal 2/6

Richard Challoner 3/6,  
England's New Cardinal 2/6

*From all Booksellers*

# BLACKFRIARS PUBLICATIONS

## COMPANIONS FOR ETERNITY

By PERE CARRE, O.P.

*Translated by Clare Sheppard*

This proved French classic on the theological and practical exposition of marriage is now available to English readers.

'Only a priest can prepare people for marriage after the manner of this book.'

—*The Guardian*

*Price 2/6*

## SAVONAROLA

By MGR JOHN O'CONNOR

2/-

G.K.C.'s 'Father Brown' defends the great Florentine reformer—fanatic or saint?—with stirring vigour.

## PILGRIM CROSS

2/6

A fully illustrated description of that great spiritual adventure, the Vezelay Pilgrimage. Those contemplating taking part in a further pilgrimage will find this encouraging and stimulating.

## DARTFORD PRIORY

By A DOMINICANESS OF HEADINGTON

2/-

The hidden life of the Second Order is too little known by those busied about the world. The curtain is here drawn aside revealing their early struggles and present activities.

ST GILES

OXFORD